

There is a sufficient second.
The clerk will call the roll.
The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE), the Senator from Colorado (Mr. GARDNER), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER), and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Colorado (Mr. GARDNER) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. McCASKILL), the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ISAKSON). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 83, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 300 Ex.]

YEAS—83

Alexander	Feinstein	Murray
Ayotte	Fischer	Nelson
Baldwin	Franken	Perdue
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Peters
Bennet	Graham	Portman
Blumenthal	Grassley	Reed
Booker	Hatch	Reid
Boozman	Heinrich	Risch
Boxer	Heitkamp	Roberts
Brown	Hirono	Rounds
Burr	Hoeven	Sasse
Cantwell	Inhofe	Schatz
Capito	Isakson	Schumer
Cardin	Johnson	Scott
Carper	Kaine	Sessions
Casey	King	Shaheen
Coats	Kirk	Shelby
Collins	Lankford	Sullivan
Coons	Leahy	Tester
Corker	Lee	Thune
Cornyn	Manchin	Tillis
Cotton	Markey	Toomey
Crapo	McCain	Udall
Daines	McConnell	Warner
Donnelly	Menendez	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Enzi	Moran	Wyden
Ernst	Murphy	

NOT VOTING—17

Blunt	Heller	Rubio
Cassidy	Klobuchar	Sanders
Cochran	McCaskill	Stabenow
Cruz	Mikulski	Vitter
Flake	Murkowski	Wicker
Gardner	Paul	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 2772 AND 2766 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2763

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, the ranking member and I have a small package of amendments that have been cleared by both sides.

I ask unanimous consent that the following amendments be called up, reported by number, and the Senate vote on the amendments en bloc: Shaheen No. 2772 and Heller No. 2766.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the amendments by number.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Montana [Mr. TESTER], for Mrs. SHAHEEN, proposes an amendment numbered 2772 to amendment No. 2763.

The Senator from Illinois [Mr. KIRK], for Mr. HELLER, proposes an amendment numbered 2766 to amendment No. 2763.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 2772

(Purpose: To require the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct audits relating to the timely access of veterans to hospital care, medical services, and other health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. _____. The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct random, periodic audits of medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Veterans Integrated Service Networks to assess whether such facilities and Networks are complying with all standards imposed by law or by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs with respect to the timely access of veterans to hospital care, medical services, and other health care from the Department.

AMENDMENT NO. 2766

(Purpose: To prohibit the use of funds to transfer amounts from the Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund to any other account in the Treasury of the United States)

At the end of title II, add the following:

SEC. 247. None of the amounts appropriated or otherwise made available by this title may be used to transfer any amount from the Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Fund to any other account in the Treasury of the United States.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the question occurs on agreeing to the amendments en bloc.

The amendments (Nos. 2772 and 2766) were agreed to en bloc.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Connecticut.

MILCON-VA APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I thank Senators KIRK and TESTER for their bipartisan leadership on a measure that is vastly improved since the vote we had on a similar measure recently. I know this topic is very close to the heart of the Presiding Officer, and I thank him for his leadership as chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. It is truly a tremendous challenge that we are working step by step to address.

About a month ago, I came to the floor to help raise serious concerns about the funding levels in the MILCON-VA appropriations bill that we are now addressing because it contained serious, egregious shortfalls. As a result, I could not support it. Veterans in Connecticut as recently as this weekend asked me how and why I could vote against a measure that provided funding for the VA. My answer is: It wasn't enough. It wasn't good enough. It failed to do the job.

This measure, fortunately, is a profoundly important step toward addressing the needs of our veterans and keeping faith with them, making sure that we leave no veteran behind. This new version provides what many of us have been fighting to achieve—real help for our veterans.

We are about to consider an amendment that would restore much needed funding to the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Kirk-Tester amendment provides a much needed increase in funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs, bringing full funding to that agency—\$71.2 billion. That amount is \$2 billion more—to be precise, \$1.97 billion—over the previous reported bill, which will supplement the VA's medical services. This additional funding is not window dressing. It is not a convenience or a luxury. It will allow the VA to more appropriately account for treating hepatitis C, supporting the family caregiver program, and providing care in the community. Demand for care from the VA has continued to grow in recent months, and I will continue with my colleagues and with the Department to ensure that the VA is spending the funds in an appropriate manner, with integrity and responsiveness, to provide high quality, timely health care to our veterans.

This bill also fully funds the operation of the VA Benefits Administration. The VBA has been plagued by problems, some of them attributable to underfunding, and this amount at \$2.69 billion will facilitate the transformation from a paper-based claims process to a digital one. It will allow the VA to hire hundreds of new claims processors, speeding and streamlining the system so that veterans receive the benefits they have earned and are spared the rigamarole and redtape that has so often produced a backlog.

Recognizing increased demands, the bill also provides an increase of \$20